CDAC NETWORK

communicating with disaster affected communities

Preparing the ground for

BETTER DIALOGUE
BETTER INFORMATION
BETTER ACTION

Lessons on communicating with
communities in emergencies

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: How did we do? Community members share their views on the aid effort using Participatory Video.
Credit: InsightShare

FOREWORD

Over the last few years, humanitarian agencies have been coming around to the notion that communication is aid. As a result, we have seen the formation of specialist working groups or inter-agency initiatives with a specific focus on communication with disaster-affected communities in emergency responses, such as Typhoon Bopha in the Philippines and Iraq in 2014. Although these were positive steps forward, it seemed to take weeks – even months – to get the platforms off the ground; far too long to keep people in the dark.

Earlier projects like *infoasaid* demonstrated that communicating with affected communities could improve the quality of humanitarian assistance, giving the international community impetus to do more. This was reflected in DFID's Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP), which provided an opportunity to take this area of work forwards.

Under the DEPP, CDAC Network members tested setting up working groups in different countries. These inter-agency platforms were not only designed and implemented to strengthen national preparedness capacity for communication and community engagement but were also structured to be operational and ready to respond. A cohort of response staff, who have created a network of relationships, are now able to collaborate and coordinate joint actions, and can switch from 'preparedness' to 'response' mode when a disaster strikes.

Shongjog, the working group in Bangladesh has blazed a trail for others to follow by embedding communication and community engagement in the Rohingya refugee response and recent floods in a way that has never been seen before. The group has successfully launched vital resources like the message library and built a network of radio journalists and volunteers ready to issue life-saving information to communities when needed. The working group in the Philippines is also pioneering high standards in communication and community engagement. One of the group's successes is the innovative partnership it formed with the private sector. Consequently, humanitarian actors are now participating in response simulation exercises with private sector actors. South Sudan has proved to be more of a test environment than an established working group because of the fragile ongoing security situation and related coordination challenges.

Over a three-year period the working groups have achieved many successes and encountered plenty of challenges. They have generated a tremendous amount of learning among all the stakeholders involved. This is explored in the report, accompanied by the various tools that have been developed along the way. It makes for an informative read and is a valuable and practical resource for those involved in communication and community engagement and inter-agency working groups.

The project's achievements certainly stand out thanks to all those involved, particularly the organisations that took on lead roles in the working groups and were instrumental in taking many of the initiatives forward.

This level of investment in national platforms and capacity strengthening has driven progress in the sector. We look forward to building on and replicating this practice to create operational national platforms in every high-risk country. This will be a big leap forward to ensuring we listen to the people we seek to serve in each and every response, and involve them in the decisions that affect their lives.

Marian Casey-Maslen,
CDAC Network Director

CDAC Network technical training in Bangladesh, May 2016. Credit: BBC Media Action

1. INTRODUCTION

Communicating with, and meeting the information needs of, people affected by crisis are two of the most important elements of humanitarian response. They also remain two of the most overlooked. Effective communication with disaster affected communities is essential for improving the quality of humanitarian assistance, the efficiency of response operations, and ultimately the life-saving outcomes for people in crises.

Since 2009, the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network has been working to ensure that communities are better able to access life-saving information, have a voice in decision-making for humanitarian response operations, and that humanitarian practitioners are equipped to provide accessible information, open up channels of dialogue, and put communities in a stronger position to lead their own disaster preparedness and response.

In April 2014 the CDAC Network was able to scale up its preparedness work with a grant under the UK Government-funded Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP). Ending in 2018, the 'Strengthening information sharing and two-way communication preparedness capacity for better dialogue, better information and better action' project was implemented in Bangladesh, South Sudan, the Philippines and the UK by Network Members World Vision, BBC Media Action, Internews and the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The project sought to build humanitarian capacity in communicating with disaster affected communities, and influence sector policy and practice towards making community engagement a more central component of humanitarian response and preparedness work. The project supported three collaborative national platforms to influence policy and practice, delivered capacity strengthening and awareness raising activities to over 5,500 humanitarian stakeholders, and developed an extensive and varied body of resources, tools and learning documents which can be used by practitioners to better communicate with people affected by crisis. Many of these initiatives were delivered through the three national platforms, and in collaboration with a much wider group of partners in Bangladesh, South Sudan and the Philippines. This collaborative approach has built a sense of collective ownership of many of the new resources now available, the impact of which will continue to be felt long after the project's end.

This report is a summary of actionable learning drawn from our experiences on the project, intended for those working in the design or delivery of humanitarian programmes. Some points are considerations for those seeking to strengthen community engagement in their work, others relate more broadly to collaborating around shared goals, or implementing initiatives to strengthen knowledge and skills. The points are organised into five sections: effective communication with communities; working through collaborative platforms; working with other sectors; using technology; and capacity strengthening.

The learning in this report draws on many of the resources developed through the project, as well as project progress reports, learning documentation and wider material. Many of these resources are highlighted as suggestions for further reading in the sections that follow, and include programming tools and training materials, as well as research and further learning reports. A full list of all available project resources is listed at the end of the report. An independent evaluation report of the project is also available and included in the resource list.

All the material referenced in the report is available for free download from **http://preparedness.cdacnetwork.org**

THE CDAC NETWORK

The Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network (CDAC), established in 2009, is a growing platform of more than 30 humanitarian, media development, social innovation, technology and telecommunication organisations, dedicated to saving lives and making aid more effective through communication, information exchange and community engagement. The Network focuses on the critical interface between humanitarian aid and those in crisis.

Members represent bodies which have considerable experience, involving a wide range of communication activities such as translation, messaging, connectivity, community-based market research and feedback. The aim is to strengthen community and aid interaction to make humanitarian response more effective, empower communities, and build resilience.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'COMMUNICATING WITH COMMUNITIES'?

In preparation for disasters, and when disasters strike, people need the right information, at the right time and in the right language, to make potentially life-saving decisions. In this context, accurate information is as important as other relief items such as food, water, medical care and shelter. Effective communication with disaster affected communities is thus an important field of humanitarian action that helps to meet the information and communication needs of people affected by crisis,[1] while opening up channels of dialogue to facilitate the participation of crisis-affected people in any emergency response exercise. Ultimately, information and communication are critical to ensuring that disaster affected people are at the centre of humanitarian programming[2] and participate meaningfully in decisions that impact their lives.

The principles of communicating with communities are enshrined in various international frameworks and standards. The Grand Bargain (GB), an outcome of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, dedicated its sixth workstream to the 'Participation Revolution', while the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability puts people affected by crisis at the centre of humanitarian action. Despite these frameworks, the strategic inclusion of communities in disaster response planning and delivery remains very much a work in progress; much more effort is needed for the commitments under these frameworks and standards to be met.

Communicating with disaster-affected communities is also referred to as 'communicating with communities' (CwC), and 'communication and community engagement' (CCE).

ABOUT THE DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMME

The Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) is a five-year, £40 million programme funded by the UK Department for International Development. Starting in 2014, the programme focused on building preparedness capacity among humanitarian practitioners to improve the quality and timeliness of international emergency response operations.

A pre-selected partner under the DEPP, the CDAC Network was awarded a £3m grant under the programme. Hosted by CDAC Network Member World Vision, the project delivered interventions in Bangladesh, South Sudan and the Philippines to improve two-way communication with communities through three principle approaches: establishing national-level platforms to influence humanitarian policy and practice; funding locally-designed initiatives to build skills and knowledge and undertake evidence-based advocacy; and delivering a collection of core activities, including the Network's technical training for humanitarian staff and global-level advocacy. A DEPP innovation component jointly managed by Start and CDAC Networks continues to March 2019.

The project has successfully generated interest and awareness in communicating with communities in all three countries – with examples of influencing organisational policy and practice most evident in recent emergencies in Bangladesh – and reached over 5,500 humanitarian stakeholders with capacity strengthening and awareness raising activities. A wide array of tools and resources have been developed through 13 locally-designed initiatives in collaboration with 21 national and international organisations, while many more disaster response actors have engaged in the project through the three national-level platforms in Bangladesh, South Sudan and the Philippines, and the wider Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme.

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[1] OCHA on Message: Communications with Communities. http://reliefweb.int/report/world/ocha-message-communications- communities

[2] Practice Brief: Communicating with Communities during the First Six Weeks of an Emergency Response. http://www.cdacnetwork. org/contentAsset/raw-data/3b8afbbf-d9de-4a0e-be3f-71bd36ef030f/attachedFile

SUMMARY OF LEARNING POINTS

What we've learnt about
COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH DISASTER AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

1. To deliver actionable, life-saving information, emergency responders should strive to agree on common messages developed in partnership with communities and tackle the spread of rumours.
2. It is important to identify the right channels of communication for the intended audience.
3. Where possible, use local languages to increase the likelihood of messages achieving their desired impact.
4. Inclusion of at-risk groups should be considered carefully when developing any communication strategy.

What we've learnt about
WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS

5. Raising humanitarian actors' awareness of what communicating with communities means in practice is a necessary first step to any collaborative activity.
6. Agree a common understanding of what collaboration should look like early on.
7. As collaboration through a national platform is usually voluntary, it is important to obtain buy-in from your partners.
8. Demonstrating the value of collaborating through a Multi-Stakeholder Platform is important.
9. Link lobbying around communicating with communities to global accountability standards.
10. Leadership of a platform is important and hugely influential in terms of the group's functionality.

11. Consider the resources, time and decision-making arrangements required to maximise efficiency of collaboration.
12. Prepositioning relationships greatly enhances efficiency in an emergency.
13. Flexible funding mechanisms can deepen collaboration and foster locally-designed activities.

What we've learnt about
WORKING WITH OTHER SECTORS

14. Collaboration with other sectors can open up communication channels and build trust.
15. Engage with other sectors systematically and through established forums.
16. Being proactive in engaging with cross-sector actors requires an understanding of potential partners' interests.
17. Joint capacity building activities or events can help identify common interests and build cross-sector relationships.
18. Working with government and national partners is central to ensuring sustainability and legitimacy.

What we've learnt about
USING TECHNOLOGY TO COMMUNICATE WITH DISASTER AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

19. Mobile phones are an increasingly popular communication channel. However, access issues, including literacy rates, network coverage and ownership should be taken into account.
20. Social media can be a wide-reaching and cost-effective communication channel that allows interaction with a specific target audience.

21. Consider the timing and repetition of radio broadcasts and distributing hardware to increase coverage.
22. When communicating through radio, aid agencies should factor in the cost of airtime.
23. Video can be used to place project evaluations in the hands of communities.
24. Using real people in multimedia content instead of animations can increase trust and engagement in the content.
25. Hosting interactive programming tools online, and making resources available for free download, are good ways to ensure materials are easy to access, shared and updated. However, time and resources are needed to keep online platforms and websites up to date.

What we've learnt about
STRENGTHENING CAPACITY IN COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

26. Consider the profile of your participants when delivering training.
27. Simulations, practical exercises and learning exchanges were capacity strengthening approaches preferred by participants.
28. Consider the timing of capacity building activities and how this affects the gap between learning and application.
29. Locally contextualise capacity building approaches and tools as far as possible.

What we've learnt about

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH DISASTER AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

The following points are fundamental to communicating effectively with disaster affected communities. Whilst the learning may not be unique to the project, it reflects some of the key learnings that emerged during project implementation. For any humanitarian practitioner looking to communicate better with those caught up in crisis, the following are crucial considerations.

1. TO DELIVER ACTIONABLE, LIFE-SAVING INFORMATION, EMERGENCY RESPONDERS SHOULD STRIVE TO AGREE ON COMMON MESSAGES DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITIES AND TACKLE THE SPREAD OF RUMOURS. Agencies need to work together when developing messages for communities to ensure information is consistent, aligned and non-conflicting. Representatives of the intended audience should also be directly involved in developing messages to build ownership and improve outcomes. This is fundamental to ensuring messages are understood and result in the intended actions. When developing the South Sudan message library, data collection through Protection of Civilian (POC) sites in Juba found that engaging communities in the planning of messages, and in dissemination events through their leadership structures, helped to mitigate underlying mistrust and improved levels of acceptance.[1]

As developing coordinated messaging in collaboration with emergency responders and communities can be a time-consuming process, and challenging to achieve in times of crisis, the project invested in emergency message libraries in Bangladesh and South Sudan. The content of the messages was developed in consultation

Trialling emergency messaging via radio in South Sudan. Credit: SAADO

with communities, national-level clusters and other humanitarian stakeholders. Developing such messages as a preparedness activity ensures they are available for rapid deployment in an emergency and can be used in a coordinated fashion by responders.

As Cyclone Mora was forecast in Bangladesh, early warning messages from the Bangladesh Message Library were shared with various humanitarian actors including the Bangladesh NGO's Network for Radio and Communication, and Bangladesh Betar – the national radio broadcaster. Pre-developed messages were also shared via social media immediately after the cyclone, with two videos posted by BBC Media Action on safe drinking water and personal hygiene. The videos reached over 900,000 people and received over 12,000 'reactions' on Facebook (the number of people who liked, shared or commented on the content). Although comments didn't shed much light on how people used the information (many comments simply saying 'thank you'), the level of interaction with the content was encouraging.[2] In South Sudan messages were disseminated in Protection of Civilian (POC) sites, and project partner Internews adapted messages from the library, incorporating them into Public Service Announcement scripts and programming. These pre-prepared, ready to use messages covered information on gender-based violence (GBV) and other related harmful practices, land mines and explosives, malaria, drought, famine, and measles. Oxfam in Uganda also requested to use the GBV messages for an awareness campaign in Uganda with South Sudanese refugees. Having pre-existing messages for a range of hazards, developed in collaboration with the target audience, and verified and contextualised by the humanitarian

clusters, has proved to be an effective way to reach communities with crucial messaging quickly.

The South Sudan and Bangladesh libraries are country-specific and provide messages in English and local languages. Both are available in 'report' format, as well as via interactive web platforms. A global message library is also available. All can be accessed via the CDAC Network website.

Another important aspect that agencies should consider when sharing information with communities is the importance of tackling rumours. During the Lifeline communication training undertaken in South Sudan, humanitarian trainees highlighted tackling the spread of rumours as one of the most important learnings from the training, as they often face problems due to false information being spread between communities.[3] Rumours should be tackled quickly and efficiently by addressing them and providing correct information, via the local media or other trusted sources. The CDAC Network has developed a practical guide for dealing with rumours, Rumour has it: A practice guide to working with rumours.

2. IT IS IMPORTANT TO IDENTIFY THE RIGHT CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION FOR THE INTENDED AUDIENCE. This choice should be based on a sound understanding of the type of information communities trust, how they wish to access it, and what barriers might exist. It is likely that a range of channels will be needed, and staff should be assigned to monitor these channels and respond to any questions from audiences.[4]

The project made investments in national Media

Landscape Guides (MLGs) for Bangladesh and South Sudan to make this information more readily available for humanitarian and development actors. MLGs capture details on the media landscape for a given geographical area, including the presence of media outlets, their reach and levels of community access, as well as in some cases audience trust, satisfaction and preferences. This information can help humanitarian staff select the appropriate channel of communication for a target audience. MLGs are available for a range of countries via the CDAC Network, and the national guides for Bangladesh and South Sudan have been recently updated and expanded under the project.

It should be noted that media landscapes are dynamic. Therefore information should be updated regularly. This is especially true in fragile contexts such as South Sudan where the operation of media outlets or the availability of mobile networks can change quickly.

The choice of channel should not only be based on the target audience, but also be tailored to the specific objective of the communication. For example, South Sudan project partner SAADO recommended that high-risk groups such as commercial sex workers and long-distance drivers should be considered for GBV messages using channels that provide privacy, due to the high levels of stigma associated with GBV issues. They should also have access to links to services and the chance to ask questions.[5]

3. WHERE POSSIBLE, USE LOCAL LANGUAGES TO INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF MESSAGES ACHIEVING THEIR DESIRED IMPACT.
Humanitarian actors are often faced with a wide diversity of language when supporting disaster

affected communities. This can present a challenge when trying to communicate with a target audience or community, with the easy solution often to revert to the most commonly-spoken national language at the expense of other local dialects. Feedback from target audiences when developing the South Sudan message library highlighted that communities feel a stronger sense of ownership of messages when they are translated into local languages.[6] As a result the messages in the South Sudan library have been translated into the Nuer and Dinka languages, in addition to the more commonly-used Juba Arabic. It is important to use local dialects where possible to ensure messages are both understood and contextually relevant.

Whilst language is a key factor when communicating with communities, it is also important to note that local languages can often align to ethnicities and should be considered carefully. Local languages have been used as dividing lines within the South Sudan conflict, for example.[7] Humanitarian actors should be certain that the use of language does not exacerbate any existing divisions or conflict.

4. INCLUSION OF AT-RISK GROUPS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED CAREFULLY WHEN DEVELOPING ANY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY. When researching the South Sudan Media Landscape Guide, it was found that communities primarily share information in person, or through phones and radio, often excluding people who are deaf or hard of hearing.[8] This is a good example of why it is important to consider how at-risk groups within a target audience access information when identifying

communication channels and developing materials. Marginalisation can act as a barrier to information access, and as far as possible, information should be made accessible to all intended audiences regardless of age, gender, race, class or ability.

It is equally important to ensure marginalised groups have a voice. Data collection in the development of the South Sudan message library identified 'host communities' in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) areas who felt their voices were not being heard by those responding to the crisis, with the focus heavily geared towards IDPs. In some cases, this reportedly led to conflict between the host communities and displaced people over access to information.[9]

Inclusion should also be considered when conducting surveys, and practitioners should ensure data collection tools and resources are adapted to collect sex, age and disability disaggregated data, and survey methods allow all groups to participate on an equal basis. Through a different DEPP project, the Age and Disability Consortium developed the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for older people and people with disabilities to help humanitarian actors ensure interventions are inclusive.[±]

[±] Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities, Age & Disability Consortium, 2018. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/world/humanitarian-inclusion-stand-ards-older-people-and-people-disabilities

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- [ ] **Toolkit for Mainstreaming Communication with Communities in Emergency Response, Shongjog & Action Against Hunger, 2017 (English & Bangla)**

- [ ] **Gap & Needs Analysis Study on Communicating with Communities in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), March 2016**

- [ ] **South Sudan Communication with Communities Gap and Needs Analysis, Forcier Consulting, 2015**

- [ ] **Interactive Online Media Landscape Guides: Bangladesh & South Sudan**

- [ ] **Interactive Online Emergency Message Libraries: Bangladesh & South Sudan**

- [ ] **'How To Guide' for Communication and Community Engagement, CDAC Network, 2018 (coming in mid-2018!)**

A full list of resources developed through the project is available on pg. 28 all are available for free download from http://preparedness.cdacnetwork.org

3. What we've learnt about
WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS

Working collaboratively was a strong theme for the DEPP. Twenty-one agencies partnered to deliver the CDAC project, with many more engaging in joint activities through the three national collaborative platforms supported by the project in Bangladesh, South Sudan and the Philippines.

Trainees discuss the importance of coordination in emergency communications. Credit: BBC Media Action

These multi-stakeholder platforms (or MSPs), were a core component of the project, and seen as an effective approach to influencing national-level humanitarian policy and practice. In South Sudan the Communicating with Communities (CwC) Working Group was established by the project, while in Bangladesh an existing group was revived and rebranded as Shongjog (meaning 'linking' in Bangla) www.shongjog.org.bd. In the Philippines the project worked through the existing Community of Practice (CoP) for Community Engagement led by UNOCHA, an active group of more than 50 members established in 2012.

The project channelled over £1 million through the three platforms, financing a range of locally-designed collaborative projects which have all since contributed to an improved level of capacity for communicating with disaster affected communities in the three target countries. In Bangladesh and South Sudan, the project also directly supported the two national platforms with secretariat capacity, and the process of convening organisations around the two groups proved to be a significant undertaking. Encouraging agencies to collaborate voluntarily, especially when the focus of the collaboration – in this case communicating with disaster affected communities – was not widely understood, was both a challenge and a rich learning curve.

WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS

Much of the learning in the following section has been drawn from this convening process, as well as from our wider experience providing support to the national level platforms through the project.

5. RAISING HUMANITARIAN ACTORS' AWARENESS OF WHAT COMMUNICATING WITH COMUNITIES MEANS IN PRACTICE IS A NECESSARY FIRST STEP TO ANY COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY.
Broadly speaking there remains a low level of awareness among humanitarian actors of what communicating with disaster affected communities means in practice, in terms of providing information, opening up channels for dialogue, and engaging crisis-affected people in decisions. When engaging potential partners in this area, it is likely that an introduction to communicating with communities and community engagement will be needed before they can meaningfully engage.[10] In the early stages of the project, this limited awareness was underestimated and made it hard to explain the value of the project and the national platforms in Bangladesh and South Sudan to potential partners. It is helpful to be prepared to offer at least a basic orientation, which should set out why communicating with communities is integral to well-designed and accountable programming, and offer tangible examples for how programming approaches can be strengthened through two-way communication to better meet the various international standards relating to community engagement and accountability. Our project sought to address this gap through a series of trainings and workshops, led by the CDAC Network and local partners, as well as a dedicated advocacy project in Bangladesh,

complementing the Network's wider advocacy work at the global level. As a result, a wide range of training tools and materials are now available which can be used to build knowledge and skills.

For tools and training materials, including an Advocacy Toolkit with tips on how to engage stakeholders, please see the suggested further reading located throughout this report.

6. AGREE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT COLLABORATION SHOULD LOOK LIKE EARLY ON. COLLABORATING AROUND A COMMON GOAL CAN GENERATE GREATER IMPACT THAN ONE AGENCY WORKING ALONE.
Collective working can add legitimacy to objectives and spread the costs, benefits and risk among a group of partners. When an agenda has the backing of multiple actors, it can be an effective way of influencing change. However, collaborative approaches are rarely the same, and what is meant by 'collaboration', including what is expected of the collaborators, should be defined early on. The project experience of convening partners through the national platforms in Bangladesh and South Sudan has shown that expectations can vary widely among a group of partners in terms of how closely they plan to engage. Delivering joint activities when partners' expectations are not aligned can be difficult, so ensuring a common understanding of what collaboration means, and what is expected of the collaborators, is central to an effective partnership.[11]

Different types of collaboration should also be considered depending on the identified goals and context. An informal partnership between a small

group of agencies may be an effective way to deliver joint activities, whereas a more formalised platform with Terms of Reference (ToR) and membership may be better suited to influencing at a policy level. As part of the re-launch of Shongjog through the project, members initially grappled with the pros and cons of becoming a formal player in the national humanitarian architecture in Bangladesh, and how doing so would impact on the group's goals. Some felt that Shongjog's aspirations to bring about change in the existing humanitarian system required an autonomous and unaligned platform; whereas others felt that more formal integration with the existing system would add legitimacy and weight to the group's message.[12] Members also considered whether a new platform was needed at all, or whether the group's goals could be achieved by working through an existing partnership or structure.[13] Despite opting to remain an independent platform, Shongjog has engaged closely with the formal humanitarian architecture in Bangladesh – it is chaired by the national government and is an invitee to the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team – and this has contributed to its influence as a group.

7. AS COLLABORATION THROUGH A NATIONAL PLATFORM IS USUALLY VOLUNTARY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO OBTAIN BUY-IN FROM YOUR PARTNERS.
In reality it is not always possible to source funding for all partners in a collaborative initiative, nor is it always desirable. Participation in the Cluster Approach is, for example, voluntary; humanitarian agencies participate because they have an interest in engaging. Therefore, when lobbying potential partners to engage in a collaboration, it is

important to generate interest and buy-in, especially when the staff time required to collaborate is not directly funded.

The national platforms in Bangladesh, South Sudan and the Philippines all rely on the voluntary participation and buy-in of member focal persons. However, our experience has shown that the buy-in and voluntary commitment of those individuals does not necessarily translate to buy-in of their wider organisations. Without the buy-in of organisations, a group's influence may be limited, and the turnover of individual staff may result in a member organisation dropping out altogether.

Buy-in should therefore be built at organisational level by demonstrating how the collaborative initiative aligns with the organisational interests of a partner. In the DEPP example, it was important to show how the concepts of accountability and communication with affected communities tied in with member agencies' programming, and their commitments to global frameworks, such as the Core Humanitarian Standard.

Targeting decision-makers or senior staff as focal persons is also an effective way to strengthen organisational buy-in and engagement.[14] Senior staff with influence in their own organisations can ensure that a collaboration is given the necessary attention and resources; they can also lobby for changes within their own organisations if this is being advocated by the platform.

Generating a collective identity can also strengthen collaboration and buy-in. As the visibility of individual

Convening the Shongjog MSP in Bangladesh, June 2015. Credit: BBC Media Action

member agencies is reduced, so branding outputs under a shared identity can help generate wider ownership and minimise competition among partners. In Bangladesh, the use of the Shongjog identity for the national platform, including Shongjog email addresses for project staff, helped generate an identity for the group and avoid any perceptions of bias or the domination of any one agency.[15]

8. DEMONSTRATING THE VALUE OF COLLABORATING THROUGH AN MSP IS IMPORTANT.

Organisations are less likely to engage with a collaborative initiative or platform if they do not see the value of participating. As noted above, organisational buy-in is crucial to sustaining a collaborative process, especially when it isn't directly funded. We identified the following considerations when demonstrating value:[16]

- **Target decision-makers.** As noted above, decision-makers are typically well-positioned to influence change in their own organisations. Convincing them of the value of an initiative will help bring the rest of the organisation along too.

- **Clarity of message needs to come first.** Understand your own message and asks of

potential partners before inviting them to collaborate. It is less likely that a potential partner will collaborate if the rationale for doing so is not clear; and returning with a second invitation after the first has been unsuccessful is less likely to result in a different outcome. The clarity of your message is vital and must be backed up with evidence that demonstrates the added value engaging in your initiative can bring.

- **Demonstrate value through action.** Collaborative ventures can be stronger when they develop organically around a common understanding of value, rather than through directed processes. A good example of this is the Philippines CoP, which has grown steadily since 2012 into the dynamic and engaging group that it is today. This is in part because the CoP has demonstrated its value during a succession of emergencies, and organisations have in turn seen the value of engaging with the CoP. Initial energy should therefore be devoted to delivering something that people find valuable, with formal structures (working arrangements, ToRs, group aims) coming later. Finding common projects can help this, by providing a sense of achievement and garnering momentum.

WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS

■ **Securing buy-in from a wide range of members may require a tailored approach for each.** Different partners will have different needs, different interests and different motivations for engaging in a collaborative initiative. Understand what these are when seeking their participation, so your pitch can be tailored to the individual partner.

9. LINK LOBBYING AROUND COMMUNICATING WITH COMMUNITIES TO GLOBAL ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS. As noted in the
project final evaluation, greater linkages with global policy from the outset of the project could have resulted in greater impact in terms of influencing humanitarian policy and practice to become more systematically responsive to the needs and wishes of communities.[17] It is important to consider how advocacy around communicating with communities aligns with the interests of those you are trying to influence. Various humanitarian standards already explicitly reference the engagement of communities in decision-making processes, including the Core Humanitarian Standard on Accountability, and the Grand Bargain Commitments that emerged from the World Humanitarian Summit. Having signed up to these frameworks, many humanitarian actors have explicitly committed to opening up meaningful dialogue with the communities they seek to serve, going beyond traditional consultation approaches. Framing communicating with disaster affected communities as a vehicle to meet these commitments, can be an effective way to achieve your aims.

10. LEADERSHIP OF A PLATFORM IS IMPORTANT AND HUGELY INFLUENTIAL IN TERMS OF THE GROUP'S FUNCTIONALITY.
In most instances dedicated secretariat support is necessary to ensure the administration of meetings and coordination of collective activities. Secretariat functions may be hosted by a partner or shared among several organisations. In the case of national platforms for disaster management, government leadership is highly desirable from a sustainability perspective, but individuals and personalities can be key to whether this works effectively or not. It is important to identify leaders who are committed to taking the collaborative venture forwards. Unmotivated leaders will likely result in unmotivated partners.[18]

Under the DEPP, leadership of the platforms in Bangladesh and South Sudan was vested in the platforms' elected chairs and co-chairs. However, the provision of secretariat support to the two platforms through the project's two in-country project managers made these leadership arrangements less clear. This was complicated as they also had a role as grant managers of the DEPP's flexible funding mechanism, which financed many of the local projects delivered through the platforms. As the DEPP took the lead in convening and formalising the two groups, the roles of the two in-country project managers in some cases made it difficult for them not to be seen as the orchestrators of the working groups, rather than the elected chairs themselves.[19]

The project experience of group leadership in South Sudan and the Philippines is also telling. In South Sudan the Working Group struggled to maintain the engagement of members, which was partly due to the frequent absence of the elected chair and associated postponement of meetings. In contrast, in the Philippines the leadership of the CoP has been especially strong, with dedicated secretariat support provided by UN OCHA, and this has influenced the group's steady growth in recent years.

11. CONSIDER THE RESOURCES, TIME AND DECISION-MAKING ARRANGEMENTS REQUIRED TO MAXIMISE EFFICIENCY OF COLLABORATION. While collaboration can
enhance the legitimacy and impact of an initiative, it is also a resource intensive process. Facilitating joint activities, finding ways to demonstrate value, and lobbying people to engage takes time and requires staff capacity. When planning for a collaborative initiative, it is important to ensure a sufficient supply of resources and time – both for people who are being asked to collaborate, and for those facilitating or brokering the collaboration. As the DEPP experience has shown, diverse and complex organisational systems can also complicate and delay joint actions. Differences in management procedures, systems and structures, should be factored into planning so that activities are not held up while contracts or other working arrangements are put in place. Agreeing standardised contract templates or joint working arrangements in advance can help address this, while a willingness on the part of partners to streamline their procedures and explore new approaches can also improve efficiency.

In the case of collaborative platforms, sufficient funding is also fundamental to success. The ability of agencies to collaborate without dedicated

staff time is limited, especially when secretariat functions – organising meetings, sharing minutes, drafting reports – are required. Although sometimes unavoidable, it is risky to be over-reliant on agencies donating voluntary staff time to a collaboration, which may be de-prioritised in favour of the funded responsibilities in a staff member's job description.[20]

Collaborative decision-making can also be slow. Trying to reach consensus with a wide range of partners through overly-consultative or inclusive decision-making can reduce efficiency and enthusiasm. Although collaborative decision-making can strengthen ownership and buy-in of partners, it is important to balance this with a partnership's need to make progress and achieve results.[21] In Bangladesh, Shongjog members quickly introduced a Core Group of members to lead on day-to-day decision-making, as it became clear that consulting with the wider membership on all decisions was too cumbersome a process. Through the Core Group, members were able to delegate decision-making authority to a smaller group of eight agencies, which enhanced the efficiency of the group. Consider which decisions can be made by individual partners, and which require wider consultation.

12. PREPOSITIONING RELATIONSHIPS GREATLY ENHANCES EFFICIENCY IN AN EMERGENCY.

As highlighted in the final evaluation of the project, the focus on national-level collaborative platforms saw the successful prepositioning of relationships between response actors, building trust and promoting coordination and collaboration. While in the Philippines many of these relationships

Brainstorming governance arrangements with the South Sudan working group. Credit: Internews

already existed, in Bangladesh and South Sudan the DEPP fostered new interactions between agencies. In Bangladesh, for example, this resulted in better information sharing between NGOs and government radio and TV stations in subsequent emergencies.

In South Sudan new notable relationships have been formed between national and international agencies where collaboration was often weak.[22] Investing in joint activities at the preparedness phase can ensure that relationships – crucial for effective coordination during an emergency response – are built between individuals and organisations before an emergency hits.

13. FLEXIBLE FUNDING MECHANISMS CAN DEEPEN COLLABORATION AND FOSTER LOCALLY-DESIGNED ACTIVITIES. £1 million was channelled through the three national-level platforms through a flexible funding mechanism (FFM) approach. This approach was designed to support locally-designed activities informed by locally-identified priorities, encourage collaborative working and minimise competition between platform members.

To facilitate a non-competitive approach, the FFM was geared towards supporting the priorities of the platforms, rather than priorities put forwards by individual agencies. This was linked directly to collaborative planning processes, through which members congregated around identified priority areas, or workstreams, and then designed initiatives around each priority. Lead agencies for each workstream were identified by members, and a

project review committee was established by each platform to review proposals for FFM funding that were then submitted. Projects were capped at £100,000 each, and were required to align with the global DEPP objectives. To ensure compliance and suitability within the DEPP, the grant host agencies participated in the proposal selection process.

A review of the FFM by project partners in 2017[23] found that the approach lent itself to local ownership of actions and encouraged highly collaborative project design, although competition for funding was not entirely absent. The FFM also helped to keep members engaged in the platforms by focusing on tangible actions with funding available. The review found that the FFM allowed for the building of relationships and trust between national and international organisations, facilitated local leadership, and served as a capacity strengthening exercise for several local organisations who benefitted from hands-on support in the drafting of project design documents.

It was pointed out that the small amounts of funding made available through the FFM discouraged some larger organisations from engaging in the process, and in some cases resulted in less interest from senior management in projects that were funded. However, this was also viewed as beneficial, with the low sums of money whittling out larger agencies with less interest in the field of community engagement.

The project's final evaluation concluded that the FFM resulted in contextually-relevant projects designed at the local level, and that future FFMs have the potential to facilitate ground-up design of activities. It recommends that future FFMs earmark a portion of the fund for local organisations to strengthen local

capacity, and that specific cross-cutting issues such as gender or inclusion can also be promoted in the same way.[24]

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- **Policy Paper: The Role of Collective Platforms. CDAC Network, May 2017**

- **Final Evaluation: CDAC Network Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme, The Research People, March 2018**

- **CDAC DEPP Global Knowledge & Learning Review: Event Report, Oct 2017**

- **CDAC DEPP Bangladesh Knowledge & Learning Review, March 2017**

- **The South Sudan Communicating with Communities Working Group; Terms of Reference, CwC Working Group, 2016**

- **The Shongjog Multi-Stakeholder Platform for Communicating with Communities: Terms of Reference, Shongjog 2015**

A full list of resources developed through the project is available on pg. 28; all are available for free download from http://preparedness.cdacnetwork.org

4. What we've learnt about
WORKING WITH OTHER SECTORS

Collaboration across sectors (humanitarian, private and government) can be an effective approach to engaging with disaster affected communities.

For example, it may not always be necessary for humanitarian agencies to set up their own communications channels when communities already have established channels through the media for receiving and sharing information. The project made efforts to engage with both government and private sector actors, (such as telecommunications companies) through the national platforms, while several of the tools and resources produced through the project were targeted at media practitioners as key stakeholders when communicating with affected communities. This section captures the project's key learning on building cross-sector relationships, and how these can enhance efforts to engage with communities in emergency response work.

14. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER SECTORS CAN OPEN UP COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND BUILD TRUST. It can be difficult for humanitarian agencies to build trust, especially when their presence in a community is only short term. However, trust is central to effective communication. The Gap and Needs Analysis commissioned by the Working Group in South Sudan showed that the communication channels preferred by aid agencies – usually community meetings and workshops – were less trusted by communities than other channels. The survey of over 4,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) revealed aid workers to be the least trusted source of information, while radio was the most trusted.[25]

Journalists and humanitarians come together for an emergency simulation in Dhaka, April 2017. Credit: BBC Media Action

WORKING WITH OTHER SECTORS

As such, and where possible, it may be advantageous for aid agencies to work through established communication channels rather than invest in new ones. These channels may be managed by private sector actors, such as media outlets or local businesses and they are more likely to be known by a community, contextually relevant, and trusted. Collaboration with other sectors such as the media and private sector, can therefore[26] be an effective approach to engaging with disaster affected communities.

Nevertheless, when collaborating with other sectors, care should be taken to ensure a 'do no harm' approach. Whilst a potential force for good, media, private sector and also government actors can also be a source of negative and divisive messaging. Aid agencies must be careful not to legitimise hostile or inflammatory rhetoric through partnerships.

15. ENGAGE WITH OTHER SECTORS SYSTEMATICALLY AND THROUGH ESTABLISHED FORUMS.

Building cross-sector relationships in humanitarian action should be a systematic process. A Private Sector Scoping Study commissioned by Shongjog and led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Bangladesh recommended that a common platform or forum be established to facilitate cross-sector collaboration.[26] This resonates with the Philippines experience, where the Philippines Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) – a vehicle for engaging private sector actors in disaster management – is a member of the Community Engagement CoP. It coordinates the private sector's contribution to national disaster preparedness and response activities in a strategic

way. Shongjog members met with PDRF as part of a learning exchange visit to Manila in 2017. Having learned about the CoP's relationship with PDRF, Shongjog representatives suggested targeting the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) as a systematic approach to engaging with the private sector in Dhaka. Taking a structured approach through coordinating bodies can ensure contributions from other sectors are coordinated and complimentary, maximising the potential impact that can be achieved through cross-sector partnerships.

16. BEING PROACTIVE IN ENGAGING WITH CROSS-SECTOR ACTORS REQUIRES AN UNDERSTANDING OF POTENTIAL PARTNERS' INTERESTS.

Government agencies, the media and businesses may already have guidelines or commitments for supporting local communities, audiences or customers, and partnerships with humanitarian organisations can help them fulfil these. The Bangladesh Private Sector Scoping Study identified a general willingness among private sector actors to collaborate with aid agencies, despite Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) being a relatively underdeveloped concept in Bangladesh. The study emphasises the convergence of interests between humanitarians and private sector actors, whereby private companies can provide capacity, services, reach and trust, and humanitarian organisations technical expertise, information and legitimacy.[27] It is important for aid agencies to identify where interests converge with potential non-humanitarian partners, and consider these when instigating a relationship.

17. JOINT CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS CAN HELP IDENTIFY COMMON INTERESTS AND BUILD CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS.

It should not be assumed that private sector or government actors are aware of NGOs' operations, or that opportunities for collaboration exist. The Bangladesh Scoping Study found that, for example, media and humanitarian agencies shared a lack of understanding of each other's operations.[28] A first step to engaging with non-humanitarian actors is to build this mutual understanding. This process should be proactive and specifically target partners who can strengthen emergency interventions.

Throughout the project, joint training and simulations were found to be effective approaches for bringing together staff from different sectors, building trust and instigating partnerships. In South Sudan, training in humanitarian communications provided by BBC Media Action specifically targeted participants from both aid agencies and media outlets to build trust and relationships between the two sectors, in addition to strengthening knowledge and skills. Teams were mixed to ensure that humanitarian workers and media professionals could experience the nuanced challenges and opportunities of working with people from different sectors. Participants were also intentionally mixed during simulation activities – with humanitarian staff taking on the roles of radio producers, and vice versa – to build empathy and understanding. In their feedback, all participants felt that the training approach would help facilitate joined-up communication between humanitarian and media organisations post training, with one media trainee reflecting, "this training is going to strengthen the relationship between the media and humanitarian organisations [...] in a country like South Sudan, the two parties should play a major role in life saving."[29]

18. WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL PARTNERS IS CENTRAL TO ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGITIMACY.

Cross-sector partnering should, wherever possible, begin with government. Government agencies are mandated first responders and aid agencies should support their capacity to deliver on this mandate as far as it is practical and realistic to do so. Working through government not only provides legitimacy to humanitarian actions, but builds national level capacity and resilience in the long run. The same is true for working with national civil society organisations.

The DEPP experience in Bangladesh and South Sudan has illustrated how engaging with national and local government can bring about greater impact, and ultimately better results for communities. In Bangladesh the national Shongjog platform has been chaired by the government since 2015. This link has helped Shongjog embed two-way communication approaches in the government's own disaster management planning and capacity strengthening programmes, and make recommendations to the government's national review of its Standing Orders on Disasters. In the Philippines, World Vision partnered with the local Department of Education to develop a training module on effectively communicating with children. The local government department was so impressed by the approach that it is now working with the project's lead agency – World Vision Philippines – to incorporate the module into its regional disaster risk reduction work with schools. In both examples, working through government has ensured the sustainability of interventions, and longer-term benefits for communities themselves.

Although not cross-sector as such, partnering with national NGOs and civil society is also fundamental to building national-level emergency response capacity. Partnerships with local organisations should be mutually beneficial, with international agencies willing to provide capacity building and support as required.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- ■ Scoping Study: Engaging the Private Sector in Mainstreaming Communication with Communities, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Bangladesh, October 2017

- ■ Covering Conflict in Disaster Affected Communities: A Humanitarian Reporting Field Guide for Journalists, Peace and Conflict Journalism Network (PECOJON), 2017

- ■ Broadcasting Live Radio Programs on Disaster Preparedness and Response through Community Radio Stations: A Guideline, BDRCS, August 2017 (English & Bangla)

- ■ Lifeline Communication Training in South Sudan; DEPP Evaluation, BBC Media Action, 2017

A full list of resources developed through the project is available on pg. 28; all are available for free download from http://preparedness.cdacnetwork.org

Communicating with communities through radio in South Sudan. Credit: Internews

USING TECHNOLOGY TO COMMUNICATE WITH DISASTER AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Using appropriate communications technology can allow disaster responders to share and gather reliable and accurate information in a more timely and effective way. Mass communication channels such as radio, mobile phone or social media can be used to reach more people in a shorter space of time, with information in a wider range of formats.

Trialling the 'RICAA' information needs assessment tool through Ham Radio in the Philippines. Credit: IOM

The project explored the use of technology in several ways: a rapid information needs assessment tool in the Philippines was trialled using an app for data collection, with results posted on the online Community Response Map platform hosted by IOM; an SMS-based feedback system was developed and trialled during the Marawi Crisis in the southern Philippines in 2017; and over 900,000 people were reached with early warning messaging via Facebook prior to Cyclone Mora in Bangladesh. The use of social media, radio and participatory video-making as humanitarian communication channels, have been explored more deeply through three of the locally-funded projects, with guidance documents developed on the use of participatory video, and community radio in Bangladesh. These can all be found on the CDAC Network website. Finally, the housing of tools and resources online has enabled the development of interactive formats for the humanitarian message libraries and Media Landscape Guides developed under the project.

The learning points that follow, draw on our experience working with radio, mobile phones, video and social media.

19. MOBILE PHONES ARE AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR COMMUNICATION CHANNEL.

However, access issues, including literacy rates, network coverage and ownership should be taken into account. Access to mobile phones is growing but coverage remains uneven. Although a popular communication channel, aid agencies should consider who can access messaging via mobile phones and how this impacts on the suitability of mobile phones as a communication channel. Access within the family unit should also be considered. An earlier paper on IDPs in Northern Iraq revealed that women and girls often have limited access compared to men.[30]

In the Philippines, the country's two largest telecommunication companies – Smart and Globe – are members of the national Community Engagement Community of Practice (CoP). As part of the Shongjog learning exchange to the Philippines, meetings with Smart highlighted the considerable scope for aid agencies and telecommunication companies to work together, improving access to information in humanitarian contexts. For example, Smart now offers free SIM cards and phone credit to affected communities in the aftermath of an emergency, and much of their engagement in emergency preparedness and response is coordinated through the CoP. More details on how the CoP engages with Smart and Globe can be found on the CoP website.[31] Efforts were made in Bangladesh to engage with telecommunication companies, media, and the private sector more broadly, with a scoping study on private sector engagement produced by IOM alongside awareness raising activities to 10 companies. This has not yet resulted in any formal partnership. See section 4 for further learning on working with the private sector.

20. SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BE A WIDE-REACHING AND COST-EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION CHANNEL THAT ALLOWS INTERACTION WITH A SPECIFIC TARGET AUDIENCE.

Social media can provide an effective platform for communicating with disaster affected people. Where target communities have access to social media platforms, this can allow for wide-reaching messaging with relatively few resources. A small social media pilot project in Bangladesh used Cyclone Mora in 2017 as an opportunity to trial Facebook video content on water purification and personal hygiene, alongside other early warning messaging. The videos were available online for 72 hours and reached 900,000 people in the disaster affected areas, with a further 325,000 people being reached by onward posting through the Facebook pages of Bangladeshi partner organisations, including the Dhaka Tribune, Rtv, the Bangla Tribune, and UNICEF.

Social media has the potential to greatly enhance the impact of an information campaign through direct interaction with a target audience. The social media pilot in Bangladesh highlighted that the ability to interact with information via Facebook made people more confident about adopting new recommendations and advice. For example, the project shared videos on water purification techniques and found there was a greater willingness both to apply techniques and to pass this information on to others.[32] Facebook's 'Insights' tool enables page owners to track users' interaction with a page and can be used to monitor anonymous information such as demographics, location, page likes and levels of engagement. As such, Facebook also allows for greater accuracy in audience targeting. Nevertheless, an evaluation of the social media project noted that

the quality of audience interaction was low, with most comments being expressions of gratitude rather than follow-up questions or feedback on how individuals had used the messages. The evaluation notes that more experimentation is needed to capitalise on Facebook's audience interaction potential and how it can contribute to an effective two-way communication model for community engagement and feedback.[33]

Despite clear benefits, access to social media should be carefully considered; connectivity can be lost during a crisis and, as with other forms of communication, it is often the most vulnerable and marginalised who do not have access. Additionally, while social media is a good way to keep communication costs low, resourcing is required to ensure staff are available to respond to questions and keep information up-to-date.

21. CONSIDER THE TIMING AND REPETITION OF RADIO BROADCASTS AND DISTRIBUTING HARDWARE TO INCREASE COVERAGE.

Radio has proved to be an especially popular medium for communicating with target groups. In South Sudan, the Gap and Needs study and the research for the message library both revealed radio to be the most popular communications channel among those surveyed.[34] While testing messages for the South Sudan message library, local partner SAADO found that it was important to vary the timing of information broadcast via radio to reach different target audiences, for example, those who are at work or school during the day, or others who only use the radio at certain times. In South Sudan communities also suggested the provision of hand-wound or solar-powered radios as a way to increase coverage.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO COMMUNICATE WITH DISASTER AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

22. WHEN COMMUNICATING THROUGH RADIO, AID AGENCIES SHOULD FACTOR IN THE COST OF AIRTIME. Lifeline communications training, delivered in South Sudan by BBC Media Action, brought together local media and humanitarian staff. An issue highlighted by participants from the media was that local radio stations are sometimes on air for a limited number of hours per day due to a lack of resources, including fuel to sustain generators. Some stations do not pay their staff salaries – rather money is earned for the work done within the available broadcasting hours. By collaborating with local radio, humanitarian actors can provide a valuable source of funding for local radio which can have much wider benefit to the communities they serve. It is important to build in costs for radio airplay in communications budgets.[35]

Through this project various resources have been developed to strengthen the engagement between humanitarian responders and the media. This includes a detailed set of guidelines for working with radio stations and a manual for journalists on how to report humanitarian crises. All are available on the CDAC Network website.

23. VIDEO CAN BE USED TO PLACE PROJECT EVALUATIONS IN THE HANDS OF COMMUNITIES. In Bangladesh the project worked with Action Aid and InsightShare to trial the Participatory Video methodology when evaluating a recent humanitarian response. The approach enabled target groups to communicate directly on the issues that affected them. The groups choose their own speakers, identify their own issues, then shoot and edit their own films. The trial evaluation in Bangladesh was conducted with a community recently affected by flooding. The process raised key issues about the communities' views of the aid provided, and also the longer-term preparedness measures in place in their local area. Capturing this information in video format allowed for the findings to be screened back to the community members, and also to the decision-makers responsible for disaster management. This highlighted the added role of Participatory Video as an advocacy tool. Through the project, a locally-contextualised Participatory Video Manual was developed, alongside the collection of videos and the evaluation report itself. The videos may be accessed through the InsightShare YouTube channel,[36] while the other resources are available through the CDAC Network website.

Participatory Video was shown to be a highly effective and inclusive approach to evaluating emergency response work. Breaking down traditional evaluation frameworks, it allows communities to set the agenda, defining success through their own eyes and raising the issues they consider most important. This in-depth process can encourage a realistic appraisal of how humanitarian work can be improved.

24. USING REAL PEOPLE IN MULTIMEDIA CONTENT INSTEAD OF ANIMATIONS CAN INCREASE TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONTENT. Video content to introduce the concepts of communicating with disasters affected communities was repeatedly requested by adult trainees attending capacity strengthening events. It also proved popular when shared on social media. When developing visual messaging content, the DEPP social media pilot project in Bangladesh discovered that using real people to communicate messages was generally trusted more than animations. As part of the pilot, health-related video messages were presented by a doctor. Through an evaluation of the project, BBC Media Action consulted with Facebook users who had viewed the content. The evaluation found that the presence of an expert, coupled with real life characters and examples of problems and solutions, increased the level of trustworthiness of the content, and contributed to the video messages being perceived as reliable sources of information. According to one respondent; "real characters affect us more. We like to see real characters more than cartoons. People don't always like to see the cartoon [...] People think it is just a cartoon, how true can it be...?"[37] Similarly, an evaluation of DEPP training in South Sudan found that sharing communications with communities in a familiar format (in the local language, or delivered by a familiar individual) could reduce feelings of isolation among crisis-affected people.[38]

25. HOSTING INTERACTIVE PROGRAMMING TOOLS ONLINE, AND MAKING RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR FREE DOWNLOAD, ARE GOOD WAYS TO ENSURE MATERIALS ARE EASY TO ACCESS, SHARED AND UPDATED. However, time and resources are needed to keep online platforms and websites up to date. The project placed emphasis on making tools for practitioners available online, free to access. Hosting tools online can improve reach and accessibility, and also allow for the development of interactive tools and platforms, such as the message libraries and media landscape guides developed under the project, as well as other tools such as the IOM Community Response Map, or the Kobo data collection tool. Having led the development of the online tools and web presence for the project, the Thomson Reuters

Foundation noted that, while registration-free access to tools is a good way to facilitate access, it limits the opportunity to monitor their use. Requiring online users to register before accessing tools can be a simple way to capture data on how often tools are used. It is also important to consider how an online platform or website might be sustained after a project ends, and who will be responsible for its maintenance.[39]

Preparing to conduct an evaluation using the Participatory Video approach in Bangladesh. Credit: InsightShare

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

■ **Participatory Video for Humanitarian Aid Evaluation: a tool for two-way communication, ActionAid & InsightShare, 2017 (English & Bangla)**

■ **The Role of Social Media in Disaster Response; a Project Evaluation, BBC Media Action, August 2017**

■ **Emergency Media and Communications: a free SMS feedback system for people affected by crises, Peace and Conflict Journalism Network (PECOJON), 2017**

■ **Philippines Community Response Map (IOM); Rapid Information Communication and Accountability Assessment - Marawi, IOM, 2017. Available at: http://philippines.communityresponsemap.org/dashboard/ricaa**

A full list of resources developed through the project is available on pg. 28; all are available for free download from http://preparedness.cdacnetwork.org

6. What we've learnt about
STRENGTHENING CAPACITY IN COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The DEPP sought to build disaster preparedness capacity in communicating with disaster affected communities through a range of approaches. These included investments in national collaborative platforms, the development and promotion of various practical tools and resources, and direct training and mentoring.

Training on communication and community engagement in Kenya, Dec 2016. Credit: CDAC Network

The CDAC Network's technical training was delivered in six countries, and various training materials on two-way communication with communities were produced, including resources contextualised for Bangladesh. Learning exchanges and emergency simulations also took place, with the more practical approaches to learning proving especially popular among participants. In sum, over 3,800 humanitarian stakeholders participated in capacity strengthening activities organised through the project. The following section presents some learning from these capacity strengthening activities.

26. CONSIDER THE PROFILE OF YOUR PARTICIPANTS WHEN DELIVERING TRAINING.

Getting the right people at training is important. Communicating with disaster affected communities is a cross-cutting programming approach which should be delivered by skilled and knowledgeable programme staff. When attending training through the project, targeted agencies often sent staff

from external communications or publicity roles to participate. This was also the case when inviting agencies to collaborate through the two national-level working groups in Bangladesh and South Sudan. It is important to be clear that communicating with communities is a component of good humanitarian programming, and that capacity strengthening exercises are primarily intended for programme staff.

The CDAC Network selects participants for its technical training via an application process. Inviting potential trainees to submit applications for places on a training can be an effective way to ensure you reach the right people. Ultimately, strategically targeting capacity building at selected staff – such as decision makers, technical advisors or programme managers – can maximise the impact and penetration of skills and knowledge within agencies. As well as programme staff, targeting senior leadership can help secure organisational buy-in to new skills and approaches, increasing the likelihood that these are then reflected in organisational action plans and structures.[40]

27. SIMULATIONS, PRACTICAL EXERCISES AND LEARNING EXCHANGES WERE CAPACITY STRENGTHENING APPROACHES PREFERRED BY PARTICIPANTS. A variety of approaches were delivered through the project's capacity building element, including classroom-based trainings, simulations, mentoring and learning exchanges, supported by a wide range of tools and resources developed for practitioners. Practical approaches proved the most popular among participants. Emergency simulations were widely viewed

as effective, providing a safe environment for participants to experiment and practice responding to an emergency, which led to more sustained learning. Simulations also provided the opportunity for participants from different sectors to rehearse working together in an emergency scenario.

Learning Exchanges were also found to be an effective approach. Through the project two exchange visits were supported. The first for a delegation of Shongjog members to visit the Community Engagement Community of Practice (CoP) in the Philippines, and the second for the South Sudan Working Group to visit the Quality and Accountability national group in Kenya. Both visits were considered rich learning experiences by the travelling participants. Exchange and collaboration can be useful ways to build skills, strengthen practice and share learning, tools and approaches across contexts, facilitating new partnerships and initiatives, and ensuring good practice is shared both between projects and between countries.

28. CONSIDER THE TIMING OF CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES AND HOW THIS AFFECTS THE GAP BETWEEN LEARNING AND APPLICATION. A challenge for all capacity activities is the gap between the time of training or skills building, and when trainees are able toput the skills into practice. Arranging trainings to coincide with the typhoon or flood seasons, or introducing on-going activities to maintain new skills between crises can reduce this time gap between learning and application of learning, helping participants put tools and techniques into practice and cement

new knowledge and skills.[41] Learning from capacity building activities under the project suggests that an application – or follow-up – phase in which participants can apply the training in a real-life setting with facilitated guidance and support, can be an especially effective approach. For this to be successful, individuals in leadership roles with some level of influencing and decision-making power need to participate in training. This was incorporated as a component of the Lifeline training delivered in South Sudan, while training plans in Bangladesh were adjusted to reach humanitarian staff responding to the refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar.

29. LOCALLY CONTEXTUALISE CAPACITY BUILDING APPROACHES AND TOOLS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE. Tools and training should be developed and delivered in local languages and draw on examples from the local context. This can be achieved by involving local partners in designing resources and materials,[42] and training local staff to lead training themselves wherever possible. The project placed great emphasis on localisation. In Bangladesh a full set of training materials on communicating with affected communities were developed in Bangla (the national language), with examples chosen from local emergencies.

7. LOOKING AHEAD

Through our experience from the project, collaborating through national platforms, prepositioning resources and relationships, working with non-humanitarian stakeholders and technology providers, and strengthening national-level capacity were all found to be effective approaches to improving two-way communication with communities.

An independent final evaluation of the project found that the project outcomes were highly relevant to addressing the widely-acknowledged gaps in two-way communication. However, it also found that, while the project investments in national platforms and capacity strengthening have been important steps forwards, much more work is needed. The evaluation argues that for information sharing and two-way communication to become a predictable, coordinated and resourced component of humanitarian response, it must become a core component of humanitarian funding mechanisms.

Looking to humanitarian donors, the evaluation therefore recommends providing increased and flexible funding for information sharing and two-way communication activities before, during and after a crisis so that disaster affected people are provided with life-saving information, are able to provide feedback and raise complaints, and can directly influence decision-making processes at programmatic and strategic levels. It also recommends donors specifically look to fund national level platforms to help build prepositioned response capacity. As described in this report, collective platforms can be effective ways to influence humanitarian policy and practice, and flexible funding mechanisms can deepen collaboration and foster the local design of activities; however, both require resourcing.

Responsibility for moving this crucial area of work forwards does not only rest with humanitarian donors. In the short term there are things aid agencies can do to support strategic two-way communication with communities, that build on the investments already made through the DEPP.
The following suggestions for next steps draw on the project's evaluation recommendations, and other suggestions put forward by project staff.

1. CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE FOR INFORMATION SHARING AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION TO ENSURE IT BECOMES A CORE COMPONENT OF RESPONSE. For this to be effective, linkages should be made with global policy from the outset, such as the Grand Bargain commitments and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. Humanitarian stakeholders must be reminded that the systematic engagement of communities in emergency response operations is not optional, but a requirement for meeting the global standards that many have committed to.

2. ENGAGE IN AND SUPPORT NATIONAL PLATFORMS TO SUPPORT THE COORDINATION OF INFORMATION SHARING AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION. Where platforms do not exist, seek to convene new national-level groups drawing on the learning in this report and other project learning material. It is recommended that thesetarget the involvement of senior operational staff to strengthen effectiveness and sector buy-in, establish concrete links with humanitarian decision-making forums such as the Humanitarian Country Coordination Team (HCCT), and proactively engage local and national organisations.

3. FURTHER TEST, REFINE AND PROMOTE TOOLS AND RESOURCES. A WIDE RANGE OF PROGRAMMATIC TOOLS AND RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD VIA THE CDAC NETWORK WEBSITE AND ARE REFERENCED THROUGHOUT THIS LEARNING REPORT. Many of these can be accessed through the preparedness.cdacnetwork.org microsite. These resources now need to be used, tested further, refined and contextualised for other parts of the world to maximise their value and broaden their application.

4. DOCUMENT EVIDENCE OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL IMPACT. Convincing both donors and practitioners of the value of two-way communication requires evidence of its benefits for people affected by crises. Where possible implementing organisations should document the improved humanitarian outcomes that can be brought about through systematic engagement of communities. This evidence, coupled with linkages to global commitments and frameworks, can be a basis for advocacy at all levels of the humanitarian system.

All resources referenced in this report are available for free download from
http://preparedness.cdacnetwork.org

Philippines Project Manager Arnold Salvador leads a field test of the 'RICAA' needs assessment tool. Credit IOMk

LIST OF RESOURCES

The following resources were developed through the project. All are available for free download from http://preparedness.cdacnetwork.org unless an alternative link is provided.

In most cases resources have been credited to the lead agency, although many have benefitted from substantial input from a wider group of organisations. A full list of agencies who have contributed to the CDAC Network DEPP may be found at the end of this report.

TRAINING RESOURCES

Communication and Community Engagement Technical Training Pack, CDAC Network

Communication is Aid: Online Training, CDAC Network & The Humanitarian Leadership Academy. Available at: https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=768

Communicating with Communities Technical Training Pack for Bangladesh, BBC Media Action, 2017

Training on Two-Way Communication: A Facilitator's Guide, BRAC, 2017 (Bangla)

Make Young Voices Matter: A practical guide to effectively engage children in communicating with communities, World Vision Philippines, 2017 (coming soon!)

GUIDELINES

Broadcasting Live Radio Programs on Disaster Preparedness and Response through Community Radio Stations: A Guideline, BDRCS, August 2017 (English & Bangla)

Communication with Communities in Disaster Response and Recovery: A Volunteers' Guideline, BDRCS, 2017 (English & Bangla)

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS

The agencies listed below have all contributed to the CDAC Network DEPP as contracted partners. Many more agencies also participated in project activities through the three multi-stakeholder platforms – supporting the delivery of capacity strengthening initiatives, advocacy, research and tools development.

WORLD VISION UK

CDAC NETWORK

BBC MEDIA ACTION

INTERNEWS

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION

BANGLADESH RED CRESCENT SOCIETY (BDRCS)

BANGLADESH RURAL ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE (BRAC)

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)

ACTION AGAINST HUNGER

ACTIONAID

INSIGHTSHARE

SKS FOUNDATION

SMILE AGAIN AFRICA DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (SAADO)

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE CENTER

GRASSROOTS EMPOWERMENT & DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (GREDO)

VOICE AFRICA

REACH INITIATIVE

WORLD VISION PHILIPPINES

PEACE & CONFLICT JOURNALISM NETWORK (PECOJON)

NASSA (NATIONAL SECRETARIAT FOR SOCIAL ACTION)

CARITAS PHILIPPINES

FOOTNOTES

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